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HRC discussion
Las Vegas*

**The First Lady's Roundtable Discussion
with
Working Women
Tuesday, October 23, 1996
Lied Discovery Children's Museum, Las Vegas**

DEBBIE HAWKINS

Debbie Hawkins is a Registered Republican who supports the Clinton/Gore re-election because of the President's efforts to help working families. Debbie works at a video and technology production company (Encore Productions) and has three daughters--aged 9, 11, and 13. Debbie intended to stay home with her kids, but entered the workforce because she and her husband wanted to be able to afford a safe neighborhood to raise their kids.

The biggest pressure Debbie feels is trying to be a good mom and still be successful in the workforce, and she would like to see more employers become supportive of their employees' family needs. She is excited about the President's proposal to expand FMLA and says, "Games and plays and school events and meetings with teachers are all things that working women need to be able to fit in their lives."

All three of her daughters have braces and Debbie faces numerous orthodontists' appointments, and the rising cost of college is also a major issue for Debbie. The V-Chip is useful for Debbie because she has "constant battles" with her daughters about what they can watch.

Debbie is grateful the President is working to preserve Medicare and Social Security because her older parents rely on it. Debbie and her husband are now trying to plan for their own retirement.

Points to Highlight:

Pensions/Retirement

President Clinton is working to protect the pensions of more than 40 million workers and retirees by reforming the federal pension insurance system and requiring companies to keep their retirement plans funded. The President is also helping workers save for their retirements by increasing pension portability, enhancing pension protection and expanding coverage.

The President's new targeted home ownership tax cut would exclude up to \$500,000 per couple (\$250,000 for single taxpayers) in gain from the sale of a home from the capital gains tax, replacing the current \$125,000 one-time exemption for those over 55. The President's proposal would be available once every two years, and would be effective January 1, 1997. This plan is paid for within the President's balanced budget plan.

The President has also proposed penalty-free IRA withdrawals for the purchase of a first home, education, major medical expenses as well as retirement, and to double the current income limits to make more Americans eligible for tax deductible IRAs.

Medicare/Social Security

The President is fighting to protect Medicare in his balanced budget proposal by preserving health care benefits for 37 million elderly and disabled without imposing new increases in their premiums, and ensures the fiscal integrity of the Medicare Trust Fund through the next decade. The President's budget also enhances preventive services and long-term care offered by Medicare, including mammography and respite care for families of beneficiaries with Alzheimers disease.

The President is committed to ensuring the long-term integrity of the Social Security Trust Fund, and firmly opposes any proposals that would use Social Security benefits to balance the budget to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy.

V-Chip

The President has given parent's greater control over what their children watch on television by requiring the V-chip in all new televisions. In addition, the President announced a breakthrough agreement with the media and entertainment industry to develop a television rating system to enable parents to screen violence and adult content, to go into effect in January 1997. More recently, the FCC approved a proposal requiring broadcasters to air three hours of quality educational programming per week, effective in fall 1997. This agreement was made possible through negotiations between the President, broadcasters, and children's advocates.

Higher Education

President Clinton is committed to protecting our investment in education -- and ensuring that all students get the education and training they need to compete and succeed -- through a series of new reforms and by supporting programs that work. The President has made higher education an option to millions of students by reforming the student loan program, expanding Pell Grants and the College Work Study program, creating AmeriCorps to enable young people to earn money for college by serving their communities, and proposing HOPE Scholarships -- a \$1,500 refundable tax credit -- to make the first two years of college as universal as high school. The President also proposed a \$10,000 tuition tax deduction per year for the cost of college tuition and training.

44,100 current and new borrowers in Nevada can take advantage of the new direct student loan program by participating directly in the program or by consolidating guaranteed loans into direct loans.

Neighborhood safety

The President is committed to making our communities and schools safer, and won passage of the tough and smart Crime Bill and the Brady Bill and the Assault Weapons Ban. The Crime Bill created the COPS program, which is adding 100,000 community police officers to the streets and neighborhoods, so far funding 44,000 officers. The Brady Bill has prevented 60,000 fugitives, felons, and other criminals from buying handguns, while 19 of the deadliest assault weapons and their copies have been banned.

The President's crime bill puts 174 new police officers on Nevada's streets. Violent crime fell 4 percent in 1995 -- the largest decline in more than a decade, and the number of murders decreased 8 percent -- one of the largest drops in three decades. Crime is down in Nevada as well -- in Reno, the number of reported murders dropped 33 percent in 1995, and in Henderson, reported robberies dropped 16 percent.

Safe & Drug Free Schools

The President's anti-crime agenda also includes efforts to prevent juvenile crime and keep our schools drug free by supporting high school athlete drug testing, new rules and regulations to end teen tobacco use, a "zero tolerance" standard on underage drinking, and the Anti-gang and Youth Violence Control Act of 1996. The Clinton Administration expanded the Drug Free Schools Act into the Safe and Drug Free Schools Act, making violence prevention a key part of that program.

Expansion of Family Medical Leave Act

The President has proposed expanding FML to allow workers to take up to 24 hours of unpaid leave annually to attend parent-teacher conferences, accompany them to medical appointments, or care for older relative's health needs. The President's employee-choice flex-time proposal would offer workers more choice and flexibility, allowing them to work overtime in exchange for up to 80 hours of paid time-off (flex-time).

SUZANNE DESSAINTS-PRINCE

The Family & Medical Leave Act enabled Suzanne Dessaints-Prince to take off three months to be with her new daughter in June of 1994 and still preserve her job. The Family & Medical Leave Act was helpful because she did not have enough vacation time.

Suzanne works as the director of all outpatient clinics at the University Medical Center in Law Vegas. Because Suzanne is in management, it was stressful on her employer for her to be gone for three months so the FMLA was very important to Suzanne's reassurance that her job would be there when she returned. "This is a very big organization and it would have been easy for them to let me go. Without that Act in place, I probably would have had to make the decision to leave my job. FMLA allowed me to have the best of both worlds--to have a career and a family."

Points to Highlight:

Family Medical Leave

In one of his first accomplishments in office, the President signed the FMLA in February 1993, ensuring that families don't have to choose between their jobs and their families. The legislation allows workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for the birth of a child, to care for a sick family member, or their own serious illness - without fear of losing their job.

The state of Nevada had no FML law prior to the enactment of the federal FMLA. This law protects about 261,203 workers in Nevada, and protects the jobs of 15,692 workers in Nevada who are likely to use unpaid leave this year alone.

BEVERLY MATHIS

Beverly is the principal of the Las Vegas public school in West Las Vegas, which is in a poor area and had the lowest scores when she took over several years ago. In order to improve the children's study skills, Beverly has focused her work on trying to involve parents and the community in creating enthusiasm for education. She set up a GED program at night for parents as well as voter registration in the schools. She calls this theme for the school, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child," (named prior to Mrs. Clinton's book). Since then, her students' test scores have improved.

Beverly is focused on the importance of education to help impoverished kids improve their lives and is grateful for the President's work on HOPE scholarships and targeted tax cuts for college costs. Beverly has two daughters herself (9th grade and 6th grade) and would rely on the President's targeted tax cuts to help cover college costs.

Beverly is a member of the "sandwich generation" and has shared responsibility with her siblings for caring for her elderly parents (aged 90 and 86). Currently, the parents stay with Beverly and her siblings for two month stints. Beverly is grateful for the President's work to protect Medicare. Even with Medicare, however, she and her siblings have covered many out-of-pocket costs for her parents.

Points to Highlight:

Hope Scholarship/targeted tax cuts for college

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Protecting Medicare

The President is fighting to protect Medicare in his balanced budget proposal by preserving health care benefits for 37 million elderly and disabled without imposing new increases in their premiums, and ensures the fiscal integrity of the Medicare Trust Fund through the next decade. The President's budget also enhances preventive services and long-term care offered by Medicare, including mammography and respite care for families of beneficiaries with Alzheimers disease.

COLLEEN ROTH

Colleen Roth, 38, has worked as a waitress in an airport restaurant under the Marriott Corporation for the past 12 years. She has one son, who is 7 years old. He attends school from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Colleen works from 4 a.m. to 12:00 noon. She relies on a neighborhood carpool in to get her son to school in the morning, then Colleen leads the carpool in the afternoon for her son and other neighborhood mothers.

Her husband is unemployed, but is working odd jobs. He lost his job of 12 years at a telemarketing purchasing warehouse when it closed. Colleen has a good union job and thinks the President has done a great job improving the economy. She supports the President's work to increase the minimum wage. She is a union shop steward and is active in the union's Get Out The Vote efforts by the union.

Colleen supports the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Points to Highlight:

Economy and Job creation

The President expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to provide tax relief for 15 million working families. As a result, 74,516 working families in Nevada will receive a tax cut. This compares to an increase in the income tax rate for only the 8,625 wealthiest taxpayers in Nevada.

Minimum Wage

The President fought for and signed into law the first increase in the minimum wage in five years, raising the minimum hourly wage to \$5.15 in two equal steps over two years.

FMLA

In one of his first accomplishments in office, the President signed the FMLA in February 1993, ensuring that families don't have to choose between their jobs and their families. The legislation allows workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for the birth of a child, to care for a sick family member, or their own serious illness - without fear of losing their job.

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Welfare to Work

The welfare roles have decreased by 1.8 million -- over 13 percent -- since President Clinton took office, after growing by 20 percent during the previous four years. In Nevada, the total number of AFDC recipients has decreased 15 percent, from 41,975 in February 1995 to an estimated 35,740 in June, 1996. Work and training activities among welfare recipients have increased by 28 percent since 1992. The President's expanded Earned Income Tax Credit has given tax relief to 15 million working families.

111,112 more families in Nevada received child support services since 1992, an increase of over 17 percent. In FY 1995, 74,311 families received child support services compared to 63,199 in FY 1992.

JOANNE ANGERSON

Joanne works for the Court Appointed Special Advocate program for the city of Las Vegas. As a single mother for 15 years, Joanne put 4 kids through college. Even though one son was the high school valedictorian and was offered some scholarships, Joanne still could not afford to send him to college out of state. She supports the President's expansion of college funding. She is also concerned about health insurance reform because after her children turned 21 years old they were dropped from her health plan.

When she was a single mother, she had to work several jobs--during the day at the police department in the child welfare office (where she worked for 18 years) and during the evening at a hotel. With 5 teenagers at home alone, she had to rely on them to be responsible and helpful to her. She used an afterschool program to keep her children safe. Joanne wishes the V-Chip had been available to her at the time.

Joanne is a member of the "sandwich generation" and cared for her father for 6 months while he was dying of cancer. She also cared for her mother who had a stroke and has found it difficult to find quality, affordable care. Joanne's new husband has a son who died of AIDS recently. Joanne talks about the stress of juggling support for family with balancing a career at the same time: "Women are balancing children, elderly parents and careers. We are people who must work but we must take care of our families as well.

Points to Highlight:

AIDS funding

Preventing HIV infection, finding a cure for AIDS, and providing quality care and treatment for those living with the disease are top priorities of President Clinton. His Administration has increased overall funding for AIDS research, prevention and care by 37 percent in three years and has sought increases to raise funding by 43 percent in four years.

The President created the Office of National AIDS Policy at the White House to coordinate and direct federal AIDS policy, increased funding by 112 percent for the Ryan White CARE Act, and revised eligibility rules for Social Security disability benefits to make it easier for people with HIV/AIDS to qualify for support.

AmeriCorps

President Clinton has invested in America's youth by making higher education a priority. He created AmeriCorps, the national service initiative that gives young people the opportunity to earn money for college by serving their communities and their countries. In the past two years, 45,000 volunteers have worked in schools, hospitals, neighborhoods, and parks. The President successfully fought for funding that provides an additional 25,000 AmeriCorps volunteer opportunities this year.

Small business loans

The President has a great record supporting women in business by increasing lending to women business owners by almost **300 percent**. The President permanently established the SBA Office of Women's Business Ownership, which has improved access to capital to women and awarded more than \$3.3 billion in SBA loans to women since 1993. Between FY '94 and FY '95, SBA loans to women increased 86 percent

The President helped small businessmen and women by expanding the annual expensing allowance from \$10,000 to \$17,500. About 6,753 small businesses in Nevada are likely to benefit from this expansion.

Americans with Disabilities

Wednesday, October 23 is Disabilities Day at Clinton/Gore -- events and press conferences are planned in states across the country. Several disability groups will be represented at the rally in Columbia, Missouri later Wednesday afternoon.

The President has demonstrated his commitment to address the concerns of Americans with disabilities by vigorously enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and other critical civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in schools, workplaces and public areas. The President has also preserved Medicaid coverage for 6 million persons with disabilities, including one million children -- often the only health care available to people with disabilities.

Domestic Violence

Also keeping our neighborhoods safe is the Violence Against Women Act, our nations first effort to reduce violence against women. Through grants from the Violence Against Women Act, Nevada will utilize over \$1 million in federal funds by the end of this year to establish more women's shelters and bolster local law enforcement, prosecution and victim's services to better address violence against women.